



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE CHAPLAIN CORPS

U.S. AIR FORCE

ENSURING SPIRITUAL FITNESS THROUGH PASTORAL CARE



CHAPLAIN CORPS HISTORY

The Chaplain Corps traces its roots to the beginning of our nation.

On July 29, 1775, the Continental Congress established the military chaplaincy. General George Washington issued this order at Valley Forge on May 2, 1778:

“The Commander in Chief directs that divine Service be performed every Sunday at 11 o’clock in those brigades to which there are chaplains; those which have none to attend the places of worship nearest to them. It is expected that officers of all ranks will, by their attendance, set an example to their men. While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion.”

Worship for the military members was voluntary, and chaplains of all faiths cooperated with each other, always being sympathetic to the beliefs of others.

On September 18, 1947, the National Security Act made the Air Force a separate branch of the military. Subsequently, the Air Force Chaplain Corps transitioned from the Army Air Corps under the leadership of Chaplain Charles Carpenter, the first Air Force Chief of Chaplains, in 1949.

In July 2020, the Chaplain Corps began supporting the U.S. Space Force in spiritual care.



Air Force chaplains provide faith opportunities, confidentiality and personal guidance. They support the free exercise of religion for all Airmen, their families and authorized individuals. Chaplains also advise leadership on religious, spiritual, ethical, moral and morale issues.



GLOBAL MINISTRY

The Air Force Chaplain Corps ministry is global in its scope. Since Airmen need to be physically, mentally, socially and spiritually fit, we seek qualified clergy with a willingness to go anywhere at any time to support our Air Force family.

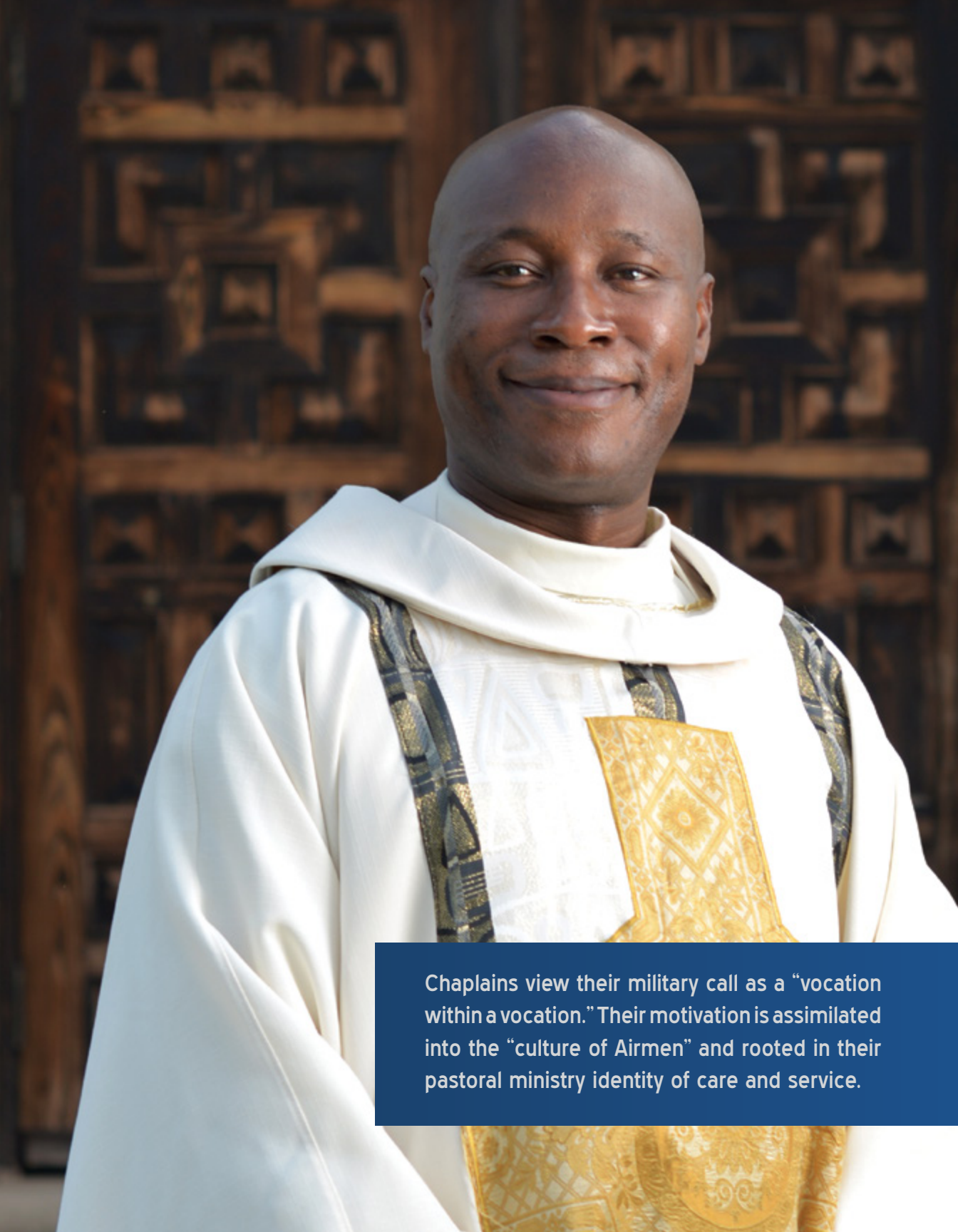
Whether at a stateside base, a makeshift worship space in a combat zone, a humanitarian mission or a peacekeeping operation, chaplains are there serving alongside our Airmen, providing them with pastoral care to ensure their spiritual fitness.

DIVERSE FAITHS

Our chaplains are ordained clergy and commissioned officers. They represent a wide diversity of faith groups including Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, Muslim and Protestant.

While they perform religious duties compatible with their own faith group, denominational tenets or traditions, chaplains also indirectly provide for religious needs of Airmen outside of their faith group.

They are responsible for religious observances in an environment that is culturally, racially and religiously diverse.



Chaplains view their military call as a “vocation within a vocation.” Their motivation is assimilated into the “culture of Airmen” and rooted in their pastoral ministry identity of care and service.



CHAPLAIN'S ROLE

Whether serving full-time or part-time, an Air Force chaplain is:

- A commissioned officer
- A practitioner of one's own faith
- A confidential counselor
- A champion for religious freedom
- A spiritual caregiver to Airmen, their families and authorized individuals
- An advisor to leadership

PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION

As spiritual care givers, chaplains often counsel Airmen facing life challenges. Communication with a chaplain in a counseling setting is considered privileged and is maintained with absolute confidentiality. This may include:

- Work-related issues
 - Deployment
 - Combat stress
 - Marriage and family
 - Finances
 - Substance abuse
 - Grief
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Chaplains are sworn to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. In taking the oath, they pledge personal commitment to the Constitution's "protection of the free exercise of religion" and its prohibition of the government's establishment of religion.



CHAPLAIN TEAM

Teamwork is a crucial part of any organization, including the Chaplain Corps. Religious Support Teams (RSTs) consist of a chaplain and a religious affairs Airman (enlisted) who focus on caring for Airmen and their families. This includes:

- Conducting worship and administering sacraments
- Performing other religious ceremonies and services
- Visiting with service members
- Developing religious education programs and religious youth activities
- Conducting seminars and retreats
- Accompanying service members into deployed environments
- Providing combat stress support
- Advising commanders on religious, moral and morale matters
- Confidential counseling service for members and their families



RESILIENCY

Our chaplains embrace the Air Force Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) approach to enhance resiliency, develop critical personal life-skills, reduce self-defeating behaviors, and improve individual resiliency skills for themselves, their families and those to whom they provide spiritual care.

CAF aims to build resilient Airmen physically (performing and excelling in physical activities), socially (developing and maintaining trusted, valued relationships), mentally (approaching life's challenges in a positive way) and spiritually (strengthening a set of beliefs, principles, or values).



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is key for progression and promotion in the Air Force. As officers, chaplains participate in professional military education to further develop their leadership skills and to help maintain their spiritual readiness.

They are also encouraged to pursue training opportunities to keep up-to-date with the latest career leadership trends and developments for worship, communications, preaching, pastoral care, counseling and administrative duties.

CHAPLAIN QUALIFICATIONS

- Be a U.S. citizen; dual citizenship is not authorized.
- Possess a bachelor's degree and a qualifying postgraduate degree in theology or related religious studies from an accredited institution.
- Must have at least two years of professional religious ministry leadership experience.
- Receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from a DoD-recognized faith group or denomination.
- Be less than 40 years old.
- Meet Air Force physical fitness standards.
- Pass a security background check and qualify for a security clearance.



REQUIRED TRAINING

As direct commissioned officers, chaplains are required to successfully complete Officer Training School (OTS) and the Basic Chaplain Course (BCC), both located at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

OTS is designed to transition individuals from civilian to military life. This eight-and-a-half-week training consists of a combination of physical conditioning and classroom studies that prepare them to be officers and leaders.

BCC is four weeks long. It includes classroom studies and field training for clergy to complete the transition from their civilian pastoral ministry leadership role into that of the military chaplain.



BENEFITS

Air Force chaplains enjoy a quality-of-life that is hard to beat:

- 30 days of vacation with pay every year
- Regular promotions with pay increases for rank and time in service
- Comprehensive medical care
- Tax-free food, clothing and housing allowances
- Discounted shopping at base department and grocery stores
- Live, work and travel around the world
- Low-cost life insurance
- Generous retirement system — a Blended Retirement Plan with a Thrift Savings Plan similar to a 401(k)

(Note: The above benefits are available to those serving full time. Not all benefits are available for part-time service. See your recruiter for more details.)





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UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

The Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard offer chaplain opportunities that are unique to each organization. To determine if full-time or part-time military ministry is best for you, contact:

ACTIVE DUTY AIR FORCE


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AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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AIR FORCE RESERVE AND CHAPLAIN CANDIDATES

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